

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 SAIGON 05703 01 OF 02 051120 Z

10

ACTION EA-13

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ADP-00 NSC-10 NSCE-00 CIAE-00 INR-10

NSAE-00 RSC-01 PM-03 DODE-00 DPW-01 PRS-01 USIA-04

RSR-01 /059 W

----- 115309

R 050915 Z APR 73

FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9674

INFO USDEL JEC PARIS

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 SAIGON 5703

LIMDIS

EO: 11652 GDS

TAGS/ PINT VS

SUBJ: AMERICAN JOURNALISTS IN QUANG NGAI

THE FOLLOWING AMCONSUL DANANG MESSAGE REPEATED FOR YOUR ACTION
AND INFO QUOTE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 DANANG 335

LIMDIS

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT VS

SUBJ: AMERICAN JOURNALISTS IN QUANG NGAI

REF: DANANG 322 AND 328

1. FRANCES FITZGERALD (NEW YORKER MAGAZINE) AND DAN
SOUTHERLAND (CHRISTIAN SCIENCE MONITOR) RETURNED LO
GVN- CONTROLLED TERRITORY AT 1100 HOURS APRIL 4, HAVING
SPENT TWO DAYS AS GUESTS OF THE PRG IN AN AREA APPROX
15-20 KMS WEST OF QUANG NGAI CITY IN TU NGHIA DISTRICT.
THE ACCOUNT WHICH FOLLOWS IS BASED ON SOUTHERLAND' S
REMARKS TO QUANG NGAI POLOFF GEORGE MOOSE AND TO ME
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 SAIGON 05703 01 OF 02 051120 Z

APRIL 4. IT WAS OBVIOUS IN THESE CONVERSATIONS THAT SOUTHERLAND WAS REVEALING ONLY WHAT HE WANTED OFFICIAL AMERICANS TO HEAR. MANY OF HIS REMARKS SEEMED INTENTIONALLY VAGUE WITH REFERENCE TO LOCATIONS AND SOME OF THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE VISIT TO PRG TERRITORY.

2. ON APRIL 2, SOUTHERLAND AND FITZGERALD WERE DRIVEN BY A VIETNAMESE EMPLOYEE OF THE QUANG NGAI QUAKER ORGANIZATION TO A POINT NEAR A REFUGEE CAMP AT TU MY VILLAGE (BS 540 740), 7 KMS WEST OF THE QUANG NGAI AIRFIELD, 2 KMS SOUTH OF THE TRA KHUC RIVER. THEY TALKED WITH RF SOLDIERS AT A NEARBY OUTPOST AND THEN WALKED FURTHER WEST ON THE ROAD. AT THAT POINT LOCAL FARMERS REPORTED TO GVN INTELLIGENCE THAT THE AMERICANS WERE TAKEN CAPTIVE BY VC GUERILLAS. THE INITIAL GVN REPORT STATED THAT THE AMERICANS APPEARED " TO GO ON THEIR OWN VOLITION." SOUTHERLAND DESCRIBES THE CAPTURE AS " UNEXPECTED AND UNPLANNED," SAYING THAT THE VC GUERILLAS SIMPLY EMERGED FROM THE BRUSH AND MARCHED THEM AWAY AT GUNPOINT. ALL THIS TOOK PLACE WITHIN SIGHT OF THE RF OUTPOST.

3. THE QUESTION OF WHETHER OR NOT SOUTHERLAND AND FITZGERALD HAD PRE- ARRANGED A RENDEZVOUS WITH THE VC MAY BECOME IMPORTANT IN THE NEAR FUTURE. SOUTHERLAND TOLD ME SEVERAL TIMES THAT THE MEETING WAS PURELY BY CHANCE. HE MADE THE POINT THAT IF A PRE- ARRANGEMENT HAD BEEN MADE, THEIR CARE AND FEEDING (DESCRIBED BELOW) WOULD HAVE BEEN BETTER STAGE-MANAGED. IT IS OF INTEREST THAT THIS WAS ALMOST THE PRECISE SPOT WHERE A GERMAN CITIZEN WORKING IN A VOLUNTARY AGENCY IN QUANG NGAI WAS PICKED UP BY THE VC IN OCTOBER 1971 UNDER SOMEWHAT SIMILAR CIRCUMSTANCES. FITZGERALD AND SOUTHERLAND HAD SPENT THE PREVIOUS DAY (APRIL 1) WANDERING ABOUT MY LAI VILLAGE, ON THE BATANGAN PENNINSULA, IN AN AREA WITH A VERY SLENDER GVN PRESENCE. FINALLY, FITZGERALD'S ASSIGNMENT,

AS WE UNDERSTAND IT, WAS TO STUDY THE EFFECT OF THE CEASEFIRE ON THE COUNTRYSIDE. IT IS THUS QUITE POSSIBLE THAT THE PICKUP WAS IN FACT BY PRE- ARRANGEMENT RATHER THAN BY CHANCE.

4. ACCORDING TO SOUTHERLAND, HE AND FITZGERALD WERE LED TO A VC AREA CLOSE TO THE POINT OF CAPTURE. DURING
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 SAIGON 05703 01 OF 02 051120 Z

THE REMAINDER OF THAT DAY THEY WERE SUBJECTED TO AN EXTENDED

PERIOD OF QUESTIONING AND EXAMINATION OF THEIR DOCUMENTS. SOUTHERLAND SAID THAT THEY WERE TREATED WITH SUSPECION WITH REGARD TO THEIR IDENTITIES AND PURPOSE FOR BEING IN A CONTESTED AREA. RADIO COMMUNICATIONS TOOK PLACE WITH HIGHER HEADQUARTERS WHILE THE GUERILLAS DETERMINED WHAT ACTION TO TAKE. (THIS WAS CONFIRMED THROUGH GVN RADIO INTERCEPTS REPORTED APRIL 4.) AT NIGHTFALL THEY WERE MARCHED FOR TWO HOURS IN AN UNDETERMINED DIRECTION THROUGH INHABITED AREAS SOUTHERLAND DESCRIBES AS CLEARLY UNDER PRG CONTROL. EVENTUALLY THEY ARRIVED AT A VILLAGE, WHICH SEEMED TO BE A HEADQUARTERS, AND MET CADRES HAVING AUTHORITY TO SPEAK AT LENGTH. SOUTHERLAND WAS VERY VAGUE AS TO THE CIRCUMSTANCES SURROUNDING HIS TALKS WITH THESE CADRES, THEIR NAMES, POSITIONS, ETC.

5. SOUTHERLAND SAID THAT THE EVIDENCE OF PRG CONTROL IN THE AREAS THEY SAW WAS ABUNDANT. ARMED MEN COULD BE SEEN EVERYWHERE. SCHOOLS, GOVERNMENT OFFICES, AND OTHER SIGNS OF ORGANIZED SOCIETY WERE VISIBLE. SOUTHERLAND COMMENTED ON THE DISCIPLINE AND RESPONSIVENESS AMONG THE CADRES, AND ESPECIALLY ON THE " INTELLIGENCE AND SERIOUSNESS" OF THE SENIOR CADRE , WHOM THEY PRESUMED TO BE EITHER A DISTRICT CHIEF OR A PROVINCE- LEVEL POLITICAL COMMISSAR. ALTHOUGH THEY SPENT THE ENTIRE DAY IN THIS PRG VILLAGE, SOUTHERLAND DIVULGED ONLY LIMITED DETAILS OF THIER OTHER ACTIVITIES.

O

CONFIDENTIAL

ADP000

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 SAIGON 05703 02 OF 02 051122 Z

11

ACTION EA-13

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ADP-00 NSC-10 NSCE-00 CIAE-00 INR-10

NSAE-00 RSC-01 PM-03 DODE-00 DPW-01 PRS-01 USIA-04

RSR-01 /059 W

----- 115320

R 050915 Z APR 73

FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9675

INFO USDEL JEC PARIS

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 SAIGON 5703

LIMDIS

6. THE REPORTERS SAID THAT THERE WAS OPEN HOSTILITY TOWARDS THEM ON THE PART OF THE POPULATION BECAUSE OF ACTIVITIES OF THE AMERICAL DIVISION INPAST YEARS IN QUANG NGAI. SOUTHERLAND NOTED MANY PEOPLE WITH LIMBS MISSING AND SCARS, AND SAID THAT HE WAS REGALED BY ACCOUNTS OF ATTACKS BY AMERICAN AIRCRAFT AND ARTILLERY. BOTH HE AND FITZGERALD WERE STRUCK BY WHAT THEY JUDGED TO BE A GENUINE RESIDUAL HOSTILITY.

7. THE SENIOR PRG CADRE WAS CONVERSANT WITH THE ARTICLES OF THE PARIS AGREEMENT AND REFERRED TO THEM FREQUENTLY BY CHAPTER AND VERSE. HE CITED EXAMPLES OF THE GVN HAVING VIOLATED THE CEASEFIRE. HE SAIB THAT WHEN HIS PEOPLE LEFT PRG AREAS TO DO MARKETING IN GVN- HELD TERRITORY THEY WERE OFTEN PICKED UP AND BRUTALIZED BY GVN AUTHORITIES BEFORE BEING RELEASED. HE SAID SOME OF THE WOMEN HAD HAD THEIR HEADS SHAVED, WHILE OTHERS HAD BEEN TORTURED BY ELECTRICITY BY THE POLICE IN AN EFFORT TO ELICIT INFORMATION. THIS, HE SAID, WAS CONTRARY TO THE PARIS AGREEMENT, WHICH GUARANTEED FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT BETWEEN ZONES. THE SENIOR CADRE STATED THAT THE PRG INTENDED TO MAKE THE CEASEFIRE WORK AND THAT PARTICIPATION IN AN ELECTION, EVEN IF THIEU WERE TO RUN, WOULD BE ACCEPTABLE. SOUTHERLAND QUOTED HIM AS SAYING
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 SAIGON 05703 02 OF 02 051122 Z

" WE WILL FOLLOW OUR POLICY ONE STEP AT A TIME. IF ONE MEANS DOES NOT WORK, WE WILL TRY ANOTHER." THE CADRE ADMITTED THAT THE PRG HAD TAKEN SOME HARD KNOCKS IN RECENT MONTHS AND THAT THE FORCES AT HIS DISPOSAL AT THE PRESENT TIME WERE NOT AS STRONG AS HE WOULD LIKE. HE DESCRIBED HIMSELF AS QUANG - NGAI- BORN, AND DECLARED THAT HIS VILLAGE HAD NEVER BEEN CONTROLLED BY THE GOVERNMENT EVEN IN THE FRENCH ERA.

8. THE THINGS WHICH IMPRESSED SOUTHERLAND AND FITZGERALD WERE: THE EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATIONS BETWEEN LEVELS OF AUTHORITY IN THE PRG AREA, THE ALERTNESS AND DISCIPLINE OF THE GUERILLAS, THE QUICK MINDS OF THE SENIOR CADRES, THEIR CONVERSANCE WITH THE DETAILS OF THE PARIS AGREEMENT, THE CLEANLINESS AND ORDER OF THE PRG VILLAGE AND THE SERIOUSNESS OF EVERYONE THEY TALKED WITH . SOUTHERLAND SAID THAT EVERYONE THEY TALKED TO WAS SOUTHERN OR CENTRAL VIETNAMESE BUT THAT HE COULD SEE AND HEAR NVA PERSONNEL IN THE BACKGROUND.

9. IN THE EARLY MORNING HOURS OF APRIL 4, SOUTHERLAND

AND FITZGERALD WERE MARCHED FOR TWO HOURS TOWARDS GVN TERRITORY AND RELEASED NEAR AN OUTPOST. SOUTHERLAND CLAIMS HE DOES NOT KNOW THE PRECISE LOCATION. THEY ENTERED A GOVERNMENT OFFICE AND REQUESTED ASSISTANCE. THEY WERE SOON PICKED UP BY MAJOR HOA, TU NGHIA DISTRICT CHIEF, AND TAKEN AT ONCE FOR AN INTERVIEW WITH COL LOI, QUANG NGAI PROVINCE CHIEF. THIS INTERVIEW WAS SUPERFICALLY POLITE AND WITHOUT RECRIMINATION. THEY RECOUNTED THE GENERAL OUTLINE OF THEIR EXPERIENCE AND THE PROVINCE CHIEF DID NOT PRESS HARD FOR DETAILS. THEY WERE THEN RELEASED WITHOUT FURTHER FORMALITIES. TWO HOURS LATER PROVINCE REPRESENTATIVES ASKED THE ARRO QUANG NGAI TEAM DIRECTOR FOR THEIR PASSPORT NUMBER.

10. IN ADDITION TO THE OBVIOUS QUESTION OF " CONSORTING WITH THE ENEMY", THERE ARE SEVERAL OTHER ASPECTS OF THIS AFFAIR WHICH ARE SENSITIVE AND MAY CREATE PROBLEMS FOR THE EMBASSY. THERE IS THE UNRESOLVED QUESTION OF WHETHER OR NOT THE MEETING WAS PREMEDITATED. THE QUANG NGAI QUAKERS LET THE JOURNALISTS USE THEIR CAR AND DRIVER FOR TWO DAYS, AND ALTHOUGH THE QUAKERS DENY STEADFASTLY
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 SAIGON 05703 02 OF 02 051122 Z

ANY PART IN ARRANGING THE RENDEZVOUS, THE GVN IS PROBABLY READY TO BELIEVE THAT THEY WERE INVOLVED. THIS MEANS TROUBLE FOR THE QUAKERS WITH THE ATTENDANT PUBLIC RELATIONS REPERCUSSIONS. GVN REPORTS ON THIS INCIDENT KEEP REFERRING TO TWO VIETNAMESE NATIONAL (A DRIVER AND AN INTERPRETER) HAVING ACCOMPANIED THE JOURNALISTS INTO PRG TERRITORY. SOUTHERLAND AND FITZGERALD DENY THIS ADAMANTLY. THE GVN HAS USED THE TERM " DEFECTED" WITH REGIME TO THE VIETNAMESE.

GVN REPORTS ALSO ALLEGE THAT SOUTHERLAND AND FITZGERALD DURING THEIR STAY WITH THE PRG SIGNED PAPER PLEDGING TO WRITE A

STORY ABOUT GVN VIOLATIONS OF THE CEASEFIRE AND HANDED OVER A ROLL OF FILM. THIS REPORT WAS BASED ON A GVN INTERCEPT OF PRG RADIO TRANSMISSIONS. FINALLY, IF WE BELIEVE SOUTHERLAND'S ACCOUNT OF WHERE THEY WERE TAKEN, THERE WILL BE REPERCUSSIONS WHEN THE NEWSPAPER STORY OF A STRONGLY- HELD PRG AREA WITHIN A FEW KILOMETERS OF QUANG NGAI CITY IS RELEASED. THIS MAY NOT BE NEWS TO OFFICIAL AMERICANS, BUT THE MANNER IN WHICH THE JOURNALISTS TREAT THE SUBJECT COULD BE VERY EMBARRASSING TO THE GVN.
BROWN
UNQUOTE WHITEHOUSE

CONFIDENTIAL

*** Current Handling Restrictions *** LIMDIS

*** Current Classification *** CONFIDENTIAL

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts:
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 05 APR 1973
Decaption Date: 28 MAY 2004
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: garlanwa
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1973SAIGON05703
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: RR
Errors: n/a
Film Number: n/a
From: SAIGON
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1973/newtext/t19730434/aaaahrbm.tel
Line Count: 278
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE
Office: ACTION EA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: LIMDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 6
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: LIMDIS
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: garlanwa
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 15 AUG 2001
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <15-Aug-2001 by shawdg>; APPROVED <27-Nov-2001 by garlanwa>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: <DBA CORRECTED> gwr 971201
Subject: AMERICAN JOURNALISTS IN QUANG NGAI
TAGS: PINT, VS, PINT
To: EA
JEC PARIS
SECSTATE WASHDC
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005